

# Peeled

LOVE | JOY | PEACE | PATIENCE | KINDNESS | GOODNESS | FAITHFULNESS | GENTLENESS | SELF-CONTROL

## GETTING UNDER THE SKIN



Faithfulness  
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February 18, 2024

The Crossing Church  
Las Vegas, Nevada

### OPENING

We're in a series about the Fruit of the Spirit as defined for us in **Galatians 5:22-23a** "But the Fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." Each of these characteristics flows out of our relationship with God when we surrender our lives to Him. This week we are looking at faithfulness. It is compared to all of the other Fruit of the Spirit in that it takes time. It requires perspective and some hindsight to see how God grows faithfulness in our lives.

### SCRIPTURE<sup>1</sup>

**Deuteronomy 32:4** He is the Rock, His works are perfect, and all His ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is He.

**Hebrews 13:8-9** "Jesus is the same yesterday and today and forever." But then it says: "Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by eating ceremonial foods, which is of no benefit to those who do so."

**1 Corinthians 9:24-27** Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore, I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I, myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

**Hebrews 12:1-2** Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. For the joy set before Him He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

### OBSERVATION

Over the past weeks we have been going deeper into how we cultivate the characteristics of God.

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<sup>1</sup> All scripture is NIV translation unless otherwise indicated.

We've peeled back our lives in order to see where God is producing His character in us. Hopefully, we are finding areas where He is rewiring, reordering, and removing so His character can be seen growing more and more prominent. It's an absolute gamechanger when this happens. That's when other people will be saying, "You're different. There's something going on with you!" Following Jesus always includes **radical** character change.

**QUESTION: What are you noticing about character changes in your attitudes and behavior since accepting Jesus as your Savior?**

Even as we change, we know that God never changes. Throughout Biblical history we see Him remaining perfect, doing no wrong, loving eternally, forgiving always and just. Sometimes He changes His mind as in His dealings with Abraham or Jonah, but His character remains the same. There has not been a single moment ever where the character of God has shifted – it is eternal. It is rock-solid and upright. We can count on Him to interact with us based on His never-changing character. He is always **faithful**.

**QUESTION: What does faithfulness look like in your life?**

**QUESTION: How has God been faithful to you? How can you be more faithful to Him?**

In our world, life is full of change. It is lightning fast when we consider our culture's values, definitions and principles which used to be our foundation. Now it is like shifting sand that never stops moving. Think about the progress in technology: What we are using today will be out of date in a few years. We have access to so much knowledge today than yesterday – but some of it has proven to be negative or even dangerous.

**QUESTION: What has technology changed in your life over the past ten years?**

## **APPLICATION**

The moments in which we are living today are more complicated and challenging than ever before. One of the joys of being part of a church is that we don't have to face them alone. There are people here to encourage and pray for us, to answer our questions and wrestle through our doubts with us. We have Alpha, Rooted, Celebrating Recovery, Readit, small groups, serve opportunities and, of course, pastors who love God and Biblically teach us about Him.

**QUESTION: In what ways are you finding solace and wisdom and resources with other Christians?**

The faithfulness of God in very particular seasons of our lives can be hard to believe. It's usually a season of loss or pain or disappointment. It's in those moments we are tempted to speak with God and ask, "Are You sure You didn't change?" Every once in a while we need to look up and set an anchor down as we look to God to help us through the challenges of this world. If we don't, we may find ourselves in a place of confusion and even sin. Doubt and frustration can derail our faith - situations when we love someone who is threatened by terminal illness and we prayed for healing that didn't happen. Then we ask why some are healed and others aren't, don't we?

**QUESTION: To whom do you go when you feel doubt about your faith overwhelming you?**

God doesn't change – His character doesn't shift – His promises aren't unkept. We have to look deeper at His loving kindness that tells us it is only the beginning. There's an eternity guaranteed to us – we don't mourn as unbelievers do. We can have joy in the midst of tears.

**QUESTION: When has your faith carried you through a difficult situation?**

There are some parallels between a marathon and a life of faithfulness: **1) Training.** We can't expect to win a race without a heavy duty training regime beforehand. As we pursue God's Spirit we must be diligent in developing practical and spiritual habits that promote faithfulness. Early morning runs and Bible study and prayer in solitude, are examples; **2) Pacing.** Sometimes we want to take shortcuts. But we need perseverance and consistency that produce disciplines leading to victory; **3) Meaning.** It comes down to motivations of purpose and a calling that God is wanting us to fulfill; **4) Finishing.** We all want to finish well, don't we? Especially us older folks who still think we have a lot to make up for. We need to remember that God's Kingdom is alive in us because Jesus paid the price for our sins and that we will transition to a ultimate destination, having done well and confident in our God's faithfulness, "fixing our eyes on His Son the pioneer and perfecter of our faith."

**QUESTION: Tell us about a time when you prepared for a strenuous, physical challenge. What did you do? How does that preparation spiritually translate into a new faithful you?**

#### **PRAYER**

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your faithfulness in all situations. Your unchanging love fortifies us when doubts come along in difficult situations. Help us to prepare for those times as an "athlete" like St. Paul did. In Jesus' name. Amen.

#### **QUESTIONS**

**QUESTION: What are you noticing about character changes in your attitudes and behavior since accepting Jesus as your Savior?**

**QUESTION: What does faithfulness look like in your life?**

**QUESTION: How has God been faithful to you? How can you be more faithful to Him?**

**QUESTION: What has technology changed in your life over the past ten years?**

**QUESTION: In what ways are you finding solace and wisdom and resources with other Christians?**

**QUESTION: To whom do you go when you feel doubt about your faith overwhelming you?**

**QUESTION: When has your faith carried you through a difficult situation?**

**QUESTION: Tell us about a time when you prepared for a strenuous, physical challenge. What did you do? How does that same preparation spiritually translate into a new faithful you?**